

MATFEN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

No. 28 - July - August 2024



These photos of Autumn leaves come from our friend in New Zealand, Kaye Forster-Hill, who took them one beautiful May morning on her dog walk around the Hamilton suburb of Nawton. While it was Autumn in NZ, we were waiting for the summer to come, and we seem to be still waiting, apart from the occasional sunny day!

But between the downpours of rain, the flowers in the gardens have been showing their own colours, such as the delicate shades of the sweet peas and the more gaudy reds of the bergamots. The seasons always change and there's always something new to appreciate and enjoy.



Many thanks to the loyal group of regular contributors to the newsletter. There's no History Corner in this edition as Sally is away, but she will be back next time. There's always space for more, so get in touch if you'd like to offer something, via contehjean@gmail.com. Happy reading!

Matfen village hall is home to many community activities and events. Individuals and groups can book it by email:

matfenvillage@gmail.com or phone: **07817 375237** or via the website at:

www.northumberlandvillagehalls.org.uk/matfen-village-hall

The hall is now an **'Emergency Hub'** in case of future incidents such as Storm Arwen, which had such a devastating effect on the community in 2021. There's a generator with a changeover switch in case power goes down again, so it can become a warm and welcoming space for those who need it. Well done to those who have overcome many obstacles to get this project to completion.

At the moment, the hall needs volunteers to take on a range of jobs and tasks to help keep in running. The poster gives details of what's needed, and who to contact if you are interested in finding out more or offering your skills and time.

JOIN THE MATFEN VILLAGE HALL TEAM!
TREASURER
TRUSTEES
EVENT ORGANISERS

Are you passionate about making a difference in your community? Do you have skills or ideas that could help enhance our beloved village hall? We're looking for enthusiastic volunteers to bring fresh ideas and perspectives to our vibrant community space.

This is a fantastic opportunity to get involved, meet new people, and give back to our wonderful village. Whether you have experience in events, fundraising, finance, or just a passion for community service, we would love to have you on board.



Interested in joining or want to learn more?

Please contact Rachael



matfenvillage@gmail.com



07817375237



Matfen Karate Club continues to flourish with a great mix of students of all ages and families training together too – it’s not just for your children!
 Recently, at our inter-club competition, one of our students scored a second successive competition success in a row, well done Abigail – the smile says it all!
 The club runs all through the summer, **every Friday at 6pm in the village hall**. Andrew and Harry are always pleased to see new members. The club meets, no need to book, just turn up and enjoy! You can contact Andrew/Harry via Matfen.srka@gmail.com

Seventeen members and friends of **Great Whittington and Matfen WI** enjoyed an outing to the fascinating Rosslyn Chapel near Edinburgh a couple of weeks ago. The chapel dates from the 14th century, and is an amazing building with many stories – some very far-fetched – attached to it. One visit didn’t really do it justice.



The WI’s monthly meetings continue in Great Whittington over the summer, with the next one on **Tuesday August 6th, 7.30pm**, including a visit from the Bellingham Heritage Centre, followed by refreshments and a time to chat. New members and visitors are always very welcome – just turn up on the night or contact contehjean@gmail.com for more information.

Matfen school reunion 2024 – Betty Renwick writes:

Our second reunion was a great success; 25 of us had a wonderful time together, remembering our happy days at school. We had tea and cakes, thanks to the kindness of Lisa and her staff in the coffee shop. Thanks go to Margot, who travelled from Surrey to be with us. And to Malcolm and Philip who were not able to be there, we send our best wishes. I’m sure Betty is planning another reunion next year – if you’d like to know what’s happening, you can contact Betty on **01661 824095 or b.renwick108@btinternet.com**



The first **Matfen Fete** for six years was, by all accounts, a great success. Despite the unpromising weather on July 13th, there was a very good turn-out of local residents and visitors on the village green and business was brisk at the stalls, the games, the bar and in the village hall for teas. The boat and duck races caused a stir of excitement along the watercourse.



The healthy sum of around £2,500 was raised, which will go towards the urgent repairs needed to the

fabric of Holy Trinity Church, but the real benefits of the fete were in bringing people together to spend time linking up again with old friends and maybe making new ones.



Danny Myers featured in the first editions of the newsletter with his allotment – here he is again, with some good news:

My first allotment, which was in Matfen village overlooking the church, brought a lot of joy. Sadly, I had to give it up when the land was sold. I adopted my belief that everything changes for a reason, so I waited for that reason to arrive. And it did! The Matfen Estate team had remembered me after 3 years and made me a delightful offer I could not refuse of a lovely plot at Standing Stone, And just like my last plot, this new allotment is open to anyone who wants to visit and relax, enjoy the peace and karma and help themselves to what's growing.

Is it really summer in the Community garden? notes from Liz Bishop

Garden notes in May started by reflecting on "recent sunshine" which had brought a flush of cheerful dandelions along road verges. Now, what can we say about the weather? Rain – drizzle, steady or torrential. Wind which prunes trees of their weaker branches with the strength of its gusts. But the occasional sunny, summery day to remark about and enjoy.

In the garden, leaves from the chestnut have now dried and been whisked into piles by wind, to be gathered for composting. Weeding continues to help keep space open for other seeds and plants. Many more donated plants have settled well – the rain may have helped – and have reached flowering stage this season: tall purple foxgloves; a phlomis with several yellow crowns; two scarlet heads of crocosmia; scatterings of 'granny's bonnet' aquilegias; and smaller violas, love-in-a-mist and hebes.



The Parish Council has been asked if the snowberry hedge, inside the stonewall, can be cut to wall height. It was reduced in height last autumn but winter-wet has encouraged long, leafy growth, which might interfere with sightlines for traffic on that bend. The suggestion is for a cut before nesting period, and another later in the year which may help to control the growth. The woody stems of snowberry will still produce soft greenery for a recognisable hedge. This season's new growth is also over-shadowing plants within the garden.

If and when summer sunshine and warmth do arrive, perhaps in time for the school summer holidays, the plants will also benefit and increase their places in the garden. The old tree

stump has now become a golden circle as Creeping Jenny covers and spreads around it!

Please remember that the garden is a peaceful space for everyone in the village, developed by volunteers with plants donated by members of the community. Please treat it with care and respect.



Two rare visitors of the feathered variety – Alan Todd



Unless you're an early riser, birdwatching can be difficult at this time of year; as small passerines (perching songbirds) tend to sing less or hide amongst leaf cover. However, patience can be rewarded around local woodland where Spotted Flycatcher, a somewhat misnamed passerine and summer visitor (more 'Streaked' than 'Spotted'), swoops for insects then returns to the same favoured perch. Wonderful to watch in flight, though untidy diners; often stripping away a butterfly's wings before swallowing the rest!

Spotted Flycatcher © Alan S Jack

Larger non-passerines are more easily found - sometimes unexpectedly. Recently, attention was diverted in the garden by a noisy Peregrine Falcon soaring overhead. Then two days later, returning from the dentist, I was amazed to find a locally rare Great White Egret 'fishing' by the Upper Pont! First reported in Northumberland in 1977, and thought to originate from Continental Europe; a few Great White Egret individuals are now recorded annually in our county. Further south, there's been a dramatic increase in population - probably driven by climate change - with several breeding pairs now present. Maybe local sightings will increase in coming years?



From all accounts, community life in the village may soon be enhanced with the re-opening of the **Black Bull**, which has recently changed hands again. There's hope that the new owners take over in the next few weeks, offering a welcoming venue to locals and participating in village life. And - if that's the case - no doubt the community will flock to the pub and spend their hard-earned cash!



News from Parish and County Councils

The next **Matfen Parish Council meeting** will be held on **Tuesday July 30th** in the **village hall, 7pm - 9pm**. The agenda will appear soon on the PC website, which has a new URL: <https://matfen-pc.gov.uk/>

The meeting, as usual, is open to all residents of the parish, and there will be an opportunity for anyone to raise matters of concern to the community. There will be discussion of several issues that may be of direct interest to residents of Matfen, including the Community Garden.

Highlights from the County Council's monthly Climate Change update:



There's a new **Climate Change Action Plan for 2024-2026**, which sets out plans to support the achievement of longer-term net zero targets and highlights the international, national, and regional contexts for the programme. You can download a pdf version of the plan on this link:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/News/2024/March/Square/Climate-Change-Action-Plan-2024-26.pdf>

or email climate@northumberland.gov.uk to request a copy of the plan in different formats.

And here's an idea for an interesting day out:

After closing in 1964, the **Northumberland Line railway** will re-open to passengers later on in the summer. Trains will run from Ashington to Newcastle, calling at Newsham, Seaton Deval, Manors and Newcastle Central. More stations will open next year. Ticket prices are being held low to encourage people to use the line.

While it may only mean an interesting excursion for us in this part of the county, the reopening of the line should make a huge difference for people living along the route, whose journey into Newcastle will become so much easier and faster, and mean they can connect directly with the Metro and with mainline trains



Memorial to Sean and Dicky – 14th October, 10.57am



Plans are now well in hand for the memorial to Sean Casabayo and Dicky Wright, who were killed when their Tornado crashed on farmland near Kirkheaton on 14 Oct 1999.

It is set to be a very poignant event, timed to coincide with the exact time of the crash. It will be well attended by military and civic dignitaries and organisations, locals, friends and family.

The memorial will be placed near the entrance to Mount Huly farm by kind permission of Robin and Barbara Joblin and it is hoped to plant a tree very near the crash site by kind permission of John and Lynn Maughn. If you wish to attend, or would like to more information, please contact Martin

Wintermeyer, preferably by e-mail martinwintermeyer@gmail.com or 07792592027. You can find all information on the gofundme page, and make a donation if you wish to, at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/jsy9ra>

And finally ... many thanks, as ever, to Revd Rachel for distributing the newsletter by email. I don't get much feedback, but all of it is positive! Any comments, suggestions and ideas for future newsletters are always very welcome: get in touch via contehjean@gmail.com And if you know of anyone who would like to be added to the email list, or who would like a paper copy, please let me know. The next newsletter will be in September.